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## **Public Awareness Initiative Focuses on the Importance of Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth's Future**

*"Brain Building in Progress" launches today on Web, ABC partner stations*

**BOSTON** – Brain Building in Progress, a public-private early childhood education communications initiative developed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and United Way, launches statewide today to raise the public's awareness of the importance of early years to the development of young children. Brain Building in Progress will highlight the need to provide the Commonwealth's youngest residents with high quality and enriching experiences to ensure healthy brain development. Public service announcements will air on ABC affiliates WCVB-TV Channel 5 Boston and WGGB-TV abc40 Springfield beginning today through October 22. A new Web site, [www.brainbuildinginprogress.org](http://www.brainbuildinginprogress.org), also launched today to provide resources for parents, teachers, community leaders, and the business community.

The launch of the Brain Building in Progress campaign follows the 2011 National Business Leader Summit on Early Childhood Investment held in Boston this past July. At the Summit, Jack Shonkoff, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Director of Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, discussed the direct impact that a negative environment can have on a developing brain. Research shows that stable and supportive relationships, language-rich environments, and engaging interactions with caring adults promote healthy brain architecture. Quality adult relationships can help young children overcome stressful conditions that may otherwise impact brain development and lead to lifelong difficulties in learning, memory, and self-regulation as well as chronic health conditions.

Increasing access to high quality early education and care and out-of-school programs is a key component in the Patrick-Murray Administration's efforts to close achievement gaps and ensure all students are prepared for future success.

"Brain Building in Progress summarizes the importance of early childhood education, an incredibly powerful tool to close student achievement gaps and to build the Commonwealth's future workforce," said Education Secretary Paul Reville. "When we invest wisely in children and families, we are investing in the future prosperity of our Commonwealth. The next generation will pay it back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship."

“High quality early education and care promotes healthy brain development in children that provides a strong foundation for their future success,” said EEC Commissioner Sherri Killins. “Assisting families, educators, and communities with supporting children’s learning helps collectively ensure a more prosperous future for our Commonwealth and our future economic success.”

Brain Building in Progress is the culmination of a seven month initiative led by EEC and United Way to create and sustain public awareness and understanding regarding the importance of children’s earliest years. EEC and United Way partnered with representatives from state government, foundations, advocacy organizations, child care programs, and early intervention to develop a common message for engaging communities across the state.

“It is vital that Massachusetts residents fully comprehend the negative impact that a stressful environment can have on a child’s developing brain,” said Michael K. Durkin, President of United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. “The architecture of the human brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins at birth. Just as the building of a home follows a sequence, brain architecture is built and shaped by early experiences. Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are tightly connected throughout life. A strong foundation early on increases the likelihood of positive outcomes.”

The initiative Web site, [www.brainbuildinginprogress.org](http://www.brainbuildinginprogress.org), will provide information on additional initiatives, programs, and sites where early education innovation is taking place and will offer individuals, families, community organizations, policy makers, and business leaders tangible ways they can get involved and take action. The public service announcements are available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZawNmpoXvI>.

The United Way and the Department of Early Education and Care are funding the Brain Building in Progress initiative with pro bono support from WCVB-TV and WGGB-TV.

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***United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley***

*One of the region's largest nonprofits, United Way's work ensures that children enter school ready to learn, youth stay engaged in school so they graduate with options for the future, and parents attain financial stability. No other single organization has the scope, expertise, and influence to bring together hundreds of human services agencies, government, businesses, private foundations and dedicated volunteers around a common vision of creating maximum impact and achieving long-lasting results.* [www.supportunitedway.org](http://www.supportunitedway.org)

***The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care***

*The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care provides the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.* [www.mass.gov/eec](http://www.mass.gov/eec)